

Veneris xvii die Novemb. 1699.

IT is Ordered at a *GENERAL MEETING* of the Stewards for the *SOCIETY* of the County of *Kent*, That their hearty Thanks be given to *Mr. Brown*, for his Sermon Preached on the 16th Instant, at *St. Mary le Bow*; and that He be desired to Print the same.

Thomas Hooper, Treasurer.

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A
S E R M O N,
Preach'd before the
Honourable SOCIETY
OF THE
N A T I V E S
OF THE
County of KENT,

Novemb. the 16th, 1699.

At *St. Mary le Bow, L O N D O N.*

By *Edward Brown, A. M. and Rector of
Langley in Kent.*

L O N D O N,

Printed for *J. Back*, (Bookseller to the said
Honourable Society) at the *Black-Boy* on
London-Bridge, 1699.



Mr. *BROWN's*.

SERMON,

Preached before the

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A

SERMON

by the Rev. Mr. [illegible]

at the [illegible]

of the [illegible]

AT THE

CHURCH OF KENT

on the [illegible]

At St. Mary's Church, LONDON

by the Rev. Mr. [illegible]

LONDON

Printed by [illegible] at the [illegible]

T O M Y

Worthy Countrey-Men.

Mr. *John Rainer*, Mr. *Tho. Hooper*,
Mr. *William Marsh*, Mr. *William Pysing*,
Mr. *Thomas Oliver*, Mr. *Robert Chandler*,
Capt. *Rich. Brown*, Mr. *Richard Lee*,
Mr. *Edw. Pearles*, Mr. *John Brett*,
Mr. *Joseph Heeler*, Mr. *Charles Johnson*,

S T E W A R D S,

For the Honourable *Society* of
the Natives of the County
of *KENT*.

GENTLEMEN,

I *Hope you will be pleas'd to Accept,*
what I have here Publish'd at
your Request (Command, I shou'd have
said) to Excuse my Self, from run-
B *ning*

Dedication.

ning into a Place where I never design'd to be, viz. The Press.

However, if it prove of any (even the least) Service to Religion, the Honour of God, or to the promoting the Good and Laudable Ends of your Society, 'twill be Satisfaction enough to him, who is,

GENTLEMEN,

Your Affectionate Countrey-man,

And Humble Servant,

Edward Brown.

A SERMON

Preached at the
Kentish-Feast

2 Epistle of St. Peter. Chap. I. v. 7.

— *And to Patience, Godliness; and to Godliness, Brotherly Kindness; and to Brotherly Kindness, Charity.*

IF we enquire into the circumstances of the Time in which the Apostle wrote this Epistle, we shall find the Church of Christ to be sadly over-run with *Heresies* and *Atheism*; the Apostle calls 'em, in the next Chapter, *Damnable Heresies*, such as over-turn'd the very Foundation of Religion: Even as he ^{2 chap. I. v.} says, *denying the very Lord that Bought them.* And these (as they always are) accompany'd with a
B 2 great

great dissolution of Manners: For so those *Hereticks* are described in the Second Chapter and Ninth Verse, *Walking after the Flesh, in the lust of Uncleanness*; and v. 14. *Having Eyes full of Adultery, and that could not cease from Sin*: And to these Libertine Practices and Opinions, they had added also great Obstinacy and Perverseness, railing against Superiors, and despising all Controul and Government, as they are set forth in this Epistle, and that of St. Jude, which is, as it were, but a Transcript of this. The design therefore of the Apostle in this Epistle, was to Fence against all these Inconveniencies, and to Arm the Church of Christ against the assaults of these Miscreants; that having, as St. Paul advises in the 6th of the *Ephesians*, *Their Loins girt about with Truth, they might be able to stand in such evil times, against the wiles of the Devil*.

When so many Wolves were abroad, there was no security for the Flock, but within the Fold, and under the direction of the Shepherd; Straglers ev'ry day becoming an easy Prey to those Deceivers, whose greatest Art consisted v. 14. *In beguiling unstable Souls*. The danger therefore of Miscarrying being so great, the Apostle had great reason to conclude his Letter with that Advice in the 3d Chap. and 17 v. *Beloved, seeing ye knew these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the Error of the Wicked, fall from your own steadfastness*. As likewise in the beginning, to Advise the Christians to Arm themselves with those Vertues of Faith, and Knowledge, and Patience, and Temperance, and to add to these Godliness, Brotherly-

Brotherly-kindness, and *Charity*; in the due and constant exercise of which, they shou'd be proof against all possibility of being Seduc'd, either into *Heresie*, or *Atheism*, as he tells them in the 10 v. *If ye do these things, ye shall never fall.* It being then but too apparent, That our present Circumstances may very well admit of the same Caution and Advice; I thought it would not be improper to offer it to You, Gentlemen, as a Societie, that, I perswade my self, is willing to Encourage, by your Example, not only those Christian Vertues of *Brotherly-kindness* and *Charity*; but those also of *Piety* and *Good Manners*.

To which end I have pitch'd upon no more than Three of these Divine Vertues, recommended here by *St. Peter*, to the Christians of his Time; the due Practice of which, I am of opinion, will be of admirable Advantage to the Cause of True Religion in These: And this I say the rather, because I look upon all those horrid Principles of *Atheism* and *Prophaness*, and the vile Practices of *Libertines* (now so common) to have arisen, in a great measure, from our Quarrels and Animosities about Religion, and consequently from the great neglect of those Divine Vertues here recommended by *St. Peter*, in the Text.

In speaking therefore to these Words, I shall do these Three things.

I. I shall Explain the meaning of these Vertues.

And

II. Show you of how great Importance the Practice of them is, with respect to these Times.

III. I shall Apply them to the present Occasion.

(1721)

First,

I.

II.

III.

1. *First*, Then of the Meaning, of these Vertues. And to begin with the First, *Godliness*. Now by this we are to understand some particular part of Piety to be meant; and not, as 'tis often taken, for the whole Complex of Religion, containing all the Christian and Moral Vertues. For here 'tis plainly mention'd but as one of 'em. The word in the Original is *εὐσεβεία* which properly signifies a *right Worship*, and very commonly *Piety*, as it has respect alone to the Honour and Glory of God: And so the meaning of the Apostle may be, That to their Patience, and other Vertues, which he mention'd before, they shou'd take care to add *Godliness*, i. e. a great and fervent Zeal and Concern for the Honour of God, in opposition to the Prophanes and outrageous Blasphemies of the Atheistical Scoffers of those Times, who made it their business to Ridicule some of the greatest Mysteries of Religion, *Speaking Evil of things*, as the Apostle observes, *which they understood not*: And this is an Interpretation which not only the word it self, but the design of the Apostle doth very well warrant; no time being more proper for the recommendation of such a Vertue, than that, wherein, through the Loofness of some, and the Indifferency of others, Religion every day Suffer'd, and God was Dishonour'd.

2 chapt.
12. v.

And then for the other two Vertues, *Brotherly-kindness* and *Charity*, there will be but little difficultie in Explaining them.

By the First the Apostle meaning the Affection and good Will, the Tendernefs and Love which

which one Christian Brother ow'd to another; a greater increase of which he desires them to shew forth at that time, so full of the Contentions and Divisions of the *Gentile* and *Jewish* Converts, about the necessity of Observing the *Mosaical* Institutions.

And by the Second, *Charity*, he intends the officiousness, and readiness of a Christian, not only to Forgive, but to do Good to his Enemies. That is, he wou'd have them not only love, and be kind and tender-Hearted one to another, to those of the same Faith and Profession with themselves; but to those also, that most Differ'd from them; yea, even to them that were profest and sworn Enemies to them and their Religion too. For thus *Grotius*, in his *Posthumous Annotations* upon this Place, Expounds these two Vertues, The first he calls *Dilectionem eorum qui pariter Christiani sunt*; and the other, *Dilectionem erga omnes Homines etiam non Christianos*. And having thus Explain'd these Vertues, so earnestly recommended by *St. Pettr* to the Christians of his time, I come now to speak to the Second Point.

That is, To shew you of what great consequence and importance, the Practice of these Vertues will prove with respect to ours. II.

And surely we that labour under the same Disease, have but too much need of applying the same Remedy.

For to speak of the First, *Godliness*. As it implies a Zeal and Concern for the Glory of Almighty God, and the Honour of Religion; what Times, what Age, and indeed (I am sorry to say

say it) what Nation stands in more need of a more than ordinary Profession of this Vertue, than ours? So that if ever we had any Zeal, or Concern for the Honour of God, we ought to shew it now, when it is attackt on all sides, by the Tongues, and Pens too, of insolent and daring Men: Men that endeavour to surprize the World with some thing that is as Extravagant, as 'tis Sinful; that lies out of the Road, and above the Imagination of common and ordinary Blasphemers: Men whose very Defences have been more Infamous, than their Crimes; and the Apologies they have made for Vice, more provoking than their Sins. 'Tis easie to guess what sort of Persons are meant by this Character: I could wish it were not so; but that it might have been with them, as with other Monsters (whose Rarity makes them so) That but one, or two of'em, might appear in an Age.

But alas, like the Plague of Frogs in Egypt, they are come up into all our Quarters, and are heard to Croak in every Corner; and (as a Great
 Sir E. D. Man once said of this Plague, upon another account) *They sit at our Tables, and dip in our Dishes, and drink in our Cups,* and in short, mingle themselves in all places of Conversation; yea, the Houses of God themselves are not free from their Intrusion; for to make the Affront more significant, thither they sometimes chuse to come to pay their Devoirs to the Devil; as if no Place were so proper to Insult the Divine Majesty, as upon His own Ground. These are the Men that

that have learnt to add Infidelity to their Sensuality, and Prophaness to their Lewdness; and are not contented only to break the Rules of Religion, and Live in contradiction to its Commands, but they must also expose it; by endeavouring to rally the Truths of it, as Incredible; and its Injunctions, as to Practice, Impossible.

Thus what Sport (so these Mad-men call it) do they make with the Articles of the Trinity, the Incarnation and Resurrection, with the whole History of Miracles recorded in the Holy Scriptures; with the Doctrines of Mortification and Self-denial, and others? And are not these wonderful Accomplishments for Men to value themselves upon, as 'tis plain they do, who are guilty of these horrible Outrages upon Vertue and Religion? For if they did not, why should they be so fond of letting themselves into such kind of Reflections upon all occasions; And most times too, when they are sure to Displease? Which therefore can never create in the World an opinion of their Wisdom, whatever it does of their Wit. But then, methinks, that is but a poor kind of Wit, that amongst Wise Men ranks its Master but in the Catalogue of Fools.

I remember it is somewhere smartly said, by one of the Antients, of the *Milesians*, *That though they were no Fools, yet they sometimes did those things that Fools use to do*; and do not these Men deserve the Application of this Remark, that notwithstanding all their Wit, play the Fool so egregiously? For in point of Discretion, I think, the difference is not great, betwixt those that do things Against Rea-

son, and those that do things Without it. Yea, I may venture to say, That the best side of the Distinction lies (if on any) most certainly on the Natural's side. It may be confess'd notwithstanding, That many of these Men have but too much of that Faculty we call Wit, unless they knew how to make a better use of it than they do. For with this they shine, and lighten, and dazle the Eyes of their Admirers, and so Captivate their Understandings, that be their Principles never so Heterodox, or Criminal, yet dress'd as they are, in the Ornaments of Art and good Language, they pass upon them for Truths; yea the very Blemishes of Vice are by them so Artfully disguis'd, and set forth with such Charms, that they look like Beauties, to those that cannot distinguish Dawbing from a Natural Complexion. Now 'tis an infinite mischief that Men so Qualifi'd have done in the World, both to the discountenancing of Vertue, and the encouragement of Vice: And I wish I cou'd say, That the vast increase of Lewdness, but especially of Prophaness and Atheism, has not been owing to such Men: Such Men, I say; for Vice never gets credit, or increase, in the hands and management of Fools; they are but sorry Factors for the Devil, and more likely to bring a scandal upon Iniquity it self, than to give it reputation. But when Men of exquisite Parts and Sense combine to decry Religion, or to ridicule the Mysteries and Principles of it, they are sure to have but too many Profelytes and Admirers.

But tho' the honour of God and Religion have extreamly suffer'd by these Men, yet I think it has almost

almost suffer'd as much by another Party amongst us; I mean from the Grave and Sober Reasoners (as they are pleas'd to call themselves) who are willing (they say) to embrace any Truth in Religion, that appears to them, upon due disquisition, to be such; but that you must pardon them for not admitting Paradoxes for Doctrines, or such Speculations, either in Divinity, or any thing else, as are beyond their Abilities to apprehend.

I remember *Lucian* tells us of the great *Epicurus*, In Alex.
and others, That if any knotty Point were propos'd to their Consideration, they would endeavour all they were able, to give a Rational Solution of the matter; and if they cou'd, well and good; but if not, they wou'd reject it, with this Dogmatical Determination, *ἴσθι καὶ ἔν γε νείκεαι ἀδύνατον*. 'Tis a Lye, and it cannot be. And this is the Method, these very Gentlemen I am speaking of, have propos'd to themselves to follow; for they have made it an Article of their Faith, That what they cannot Comprehend, they are not bound to Believe. And for this reason, the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the Doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, are, among others, dash'd out of their Creed. I do not speak this of those that deny all Revelation, for all Mysteries in Religion are the same with them; that is, they are nothing at all; but of those who admit of Revelation, but yet will not be concluded from those places that plainly affirm these things, for no other Reason, but because they cannot Comprehend 'em.

To all which, I shall say, at this time, no more than this, That for the very same Reason, they may discard a Thousand other Truths, of whose

Wif. 9.
v. 16.

Reality notwithstanding, we have all the Demonstration that both our Reason and Senses are able to give; and yet at the same time, are at a great loss about their Natures, and the reasons of their Existence. For as the Author of the Book of *Wisdom* truly observes, *We hardly Guess aright, at the things that are upon Earth; and with Labour do we find the things that are before us*: Many of those *Phænomena*, that seem most Obvious, being very hard, & some of them impossible to be Explain'd by the Wit of Man; and can it be a wonder then, that some things in Religion, that tho' True, shou'd yet be hard to be Conceiv'd? But in the mean time, the honour of *Almighty God*, and the interest of *Religion*, is extreamly prejudic'd by these Squabbles, and Libertinism and Atheism are promoted.

For whilst we are contending about the Nature of the Godhead, and the Sense of those Scriptures (we both own) upon which our several Opinions are founded, these Scoffers think they have good ground to question their Being; and, for Reasons best known to themselves, to conclude, there is none.

And ought we not, *Gentlemen*, to be Concern'd for these things? Can we patiently see the dearest Friend we have in the World Abused, and Dishonoured, Vilifi'd, and Contemn'd, by the Tongues and Pens of Sensual and Atheistical Men, and not shew some Resentment in the case? No, if any Man love God, he cannot be insensible of the daily Affronts that are offer'd Him: It must grieve him, to see Him us'd at that vile rate He daily is, by those, who notwithstanding are beholding to Him

Him for every thing they have. The good and holy *David* was so nice and tender in this point, that he tells us, he had common Friends, and common Enemies with God. *Do not I hate them, O Lord, says he, that hate Thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? Yea, I hate them with a perfect hatred, I count them as mine Enemies; and to the same purpose, 119th Psal. I beheld the Transgressors and was grieved, because they kept not thy Word: And again, in Psal. 69. 9. That the Reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me; by which he means that he was as sensible of the Indignities that were offer'd to God, as if they were done to himself: And this Mind should be in us all; and if it were, it would stir us up many times to plead the Cause of God and Religion, when we hear 'em Expos'd by Bold Men, and make us not keep silence from good Words, when so good a Cause calls for our defending it. I do not speak this, as if I thought every Man obliged to enter into Disputes with such Men, as often as they shall give an occasion; because I know every Man is not qualified to manage an Argument; especially against such, who, like Solomon's Sluggard, are wiser generally in their own Conceits, than seven Men that can render a Reason; and because also I very well know that they generally chuse to single out either the Wicked or the Weak, where what they say, either will not Displease, or will not be Answer'd: But I think every Man is oblig'd to shew his Aversion, and to Declare and Protest against the Insolence of these Wretches, when they Insult the Honour of God, and endeavour to Ridicule the*

Myste-

Pf. 139. 20
21 22.

Psal. 119.
15. 8.

Pf. 69. 9.

Mysteries of Religion : This every Man is able to do, without engaging himself in a Dispute ; and this he may do too, perhaps with as much Success, as if he were able to defend them by Mood and Figure : For a Free and Resolute Answer is as effectual sometimes to silence a bold Man, as the most Logical and Artificial Argument in the World—And I know no reason why a Man shou'd not Bluntly Answer, in Defence of those Truths that are most times but Bruitishly Oppos'd. But for Persons of Character and Distinction, whom God has blest with admirable Parts, and those improv'd by Learning, I think they cannot shew their Gratitude to him better, than by Defending his Honour, and those Truths he has been pleas'd to Reveal, against the Attacks of Prophane and Rude Men—Rude Men, I say ; for Ill Manners apparently lies at their Doors, as much as Irreligion ; since by breaking in upon those Truths they know we have a Value for, they affront us in the most sensible part : For he that needlessly Quarrels, or Ridicules my Opinions, plainly tells me to my Face, He has but mean thoughts of my Judgment and Understanding. If ever therefore it be lawful to be zealously affected in a good Cause, it is certainly in this ; for this Cause is certainly the most Glorious that either a Witty or a Learned Man can be engaged for ; *For if Religion be not worth Defending, there is nothing worth Defending upon Earth.* To stand up therefore in such a Case, is to fight for God, for Truth : 'Tis another holy War, and part of our Profession, as we are the Soldiers of Christ Jesus,—and of the Apostolical Command,—to *Con-*
tend

tend earnestly for the Faith which was once deliver'd to Jude 3.
the Saints : And he that's ashamed of this, of him
shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he comes in the
glory of the Father to judge both the quick and the dead.

And this brings me to the Consideration of the Second Vertue here recommended by the Apostle, in the Text.—For as the Christians were advised by St. Peter to add *Godliness*, i. e. a Real Concern for the Honour of God and Religion, in opposition to the Atheistical Scoffers and Lewd Liberties of those Times; so are they *Brotherly-Kindness*; by which I told you was meant that *Tenderness* of Affection, Love, and Kindness, that Easiness of Behaviour, that readiness to oblige and do good to all of the same Faith and Profession with themselves.—In this Vertue are comprehended all the sweet Intercourses of Amity and Friendship, together with a Constant and an Unwearied Endeavour of Rescuing Humane Nature from all those Wants and Miseries it labours under, and thereby Relieving the Necessities of the Poor, and Freeing them from the Oppressions of the Cruel and Unrighteous.

And that the more than ordinary Profession of this Vertue is of great Importance at this time, I think none will deny, that consider the great Dishonour and Scandal we bring upon Religion by the Neglect of it.—Great things are said of this Vertue in the holy Scriptures, and a mighty weight and stress is laid upon it; with it we may be almost any thing, but without it (if we have all other) St. Paul says *we are nothing at all*: This hallows all our other Duties and Performances: It sanctifies our Alms,

- Alms, it makes Access for our Prayers; and, as our Blessed Saviour said of one particular Branch of it, *Makes all things clean to us*: Yea, God has been pleased to joyn our Love to our Brother with our Piety to Him, and that with so indissoluble a Bond, as to profess that he will by no means accept of the One without the Other; for, as St. John tells us, *This Commandment have we received from God, That he who loveth God, must love his Brother also*—Upon these Two, our Saviour says, *hang all the Law and the Prophets*: And therefore nothing is more recommended to us in the Writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, than the said *Vertues* of Love and Brotherly-Kindness: Nay, our Saviour makes it the Characteristick Note and Badge of Discipleship; *By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another*. And indeed, so much is said of this *Vertue*, and so mightily is it prest upon us, especially in the New Testament, as if it were the All of Religion, and contain'd the whole Duty of Man.
- And doubtless, as David says, *'Tis a Blessed and Joyful thing for Brethren to dwell together in Unity*; and to walk together, not only to the House of God as Friends, but in Conversation too, to take sweet Counsel together, and to be of one Heart, and one Mouth, and one Mind, (as far as the common Duties of Love and Peace require) not only in Religion, but in every thing else: *Happy are the People that are in such a Case*, where there is no Confusion, nor Quarrelling, nor Complaining in the Streets; and where every one endeavours to follow after the things that make for Peace: This is to have our Conversation as it were in Heaven, and to anticipate one of its greatest

est Blessings and Enjoyments: Nay, when we love one another as Brethren, we do the Will of God on Earth in this Particular, as it is done in Heaven. We are then *ισαγγιστοι* without a Figure; and live the Lives of Angels and glorified Saints. And when I have said thus much, need I say any thing more to endear so great a *Vertue* to you? A *Vertue* productive of so many and so great Blessings: For the Sacrificing all our Resentments, the Forgiving of Injuries, the Doing Good against Evil, the Relieving the Oppressed, the Supporting the Necessitous; yea, all the Endearments and sweet Entanglements of Friendship, are but the Effects of this *Divine Vertue*, and the Fruits of this Grace.—And so I come to speak of the Third *Vertue*, that of *Charity*: Add to your *Godliness* *Brotherly-kindness*, and to *Brotherly-kindness* *Charity*.

Third
Vertue.

By which, if you remember, I told you the Apostle meant that Love and Compassion, and Readiness of doing Good, and shewing Mercy to those that differ'd from them in Principles of Religion; to *them that were without*, as St. Paul's Phrase is; that is, to the Gentile and Idolatrous Heathen; and to those that were hardly Christian, the *Gnosticks*.—But because there are few or none amongst us that can be the Object of this *Vertue*, as it was prest by the Apostle upon the Christians of his Time, we must endeavour to perswade you to the Practice of it, with relation to the present great Differences in Opinion about Matters of Religion, and the deplorable Animosities and Enmities amongst us, that have arisen from the same: For since we have made one another the *Heathen* and the *Publican*, we

1 Cor. 5.
12. 13.

shall do Justice enough to the Sense of the Word, and find but too much occasion for the Practice of the Grace; if we apply it to our own Times. I shall therefore endeavour to press this *Vertue* upon you, upon these two following Considerations.

First, From the Excellency and Reasonableness of the *Vertue* it self.

Secondly, From the Danger and Mischief we suffer by the Neglect of it.

First, Of the Excellency, &c.

Of all the *Vertues* of Religion, whether Natural or Reveal'd; yea, of all the Branches of *Charity* it self (the most excellent of all others) I think I may venture to affirm, That this of Treating those that differ from us in Sentiments of Religion, yea, our greatest Enemies, with Candor and Affection, and in spite of all Injuries and Resentments, taking all occasions of doing them good, is the most glorious and shining Quality in the World. There are indeed a thousand other Excellencies in *Christianity*, as are sufficient to bespeak the good Opinion, and command the Homage of Mankind; but in this our Religion justly Triumphs, not only as 'tis Excellent but Singular: For tho' before the coming of Christianity, the World had been entertain'd with many admirable Precepts of Vertue and Morality, out of the Schools of the Philosophers; yet nothing of this Nature was ever heard of, either from the *Lycæum* of *Plato*, or the *Stoa* of *Zeno*: It must be confess'd indeed, that something like this, may be met with in the Writings of those Heathen Sages that liv'd since our Saviour's time; but as 'tis easie to guess, (tho' they had not the In-

genuity

genuity to own it) whence they borrow'd those Sentiments that come so near the Principles of Christianity; so if we look more nearly into the Reasons upon which they wou'd perswade the Practice of 'em, we shall find them extremely different from those upon which our Religion commands them.—For Example, When these Philosophers are treating of the Subject and Duty of Forgiving Injuries, and of not rendering Evil for Evil, (for they go no further) they either endeavour to perswade 'em upon such Prudential Reasons as terminate in Self-Interest, or from a Principle of Contempt and Scorn; *as if Wise Men were not to concern themselves with what Fools did, were it never so injurious*; or else from an Opinion of Fatality, *That the Injurious cou'd not help being so, and therefore were not to be regarded*. For thus we find no less a Man than the famous Emperor Antoninus often arguing upon this point. But what is this to the Heroicalness of this Virtue, as 'tis stated upon the Principles of Christianity? What's the not rendring Evil for Evil, (which, as I said before, is the highest they pretend to go) to doing Good against Evil, and seeking all Occasions of Reconciling a Mans self to those that differ from him by all the Methods of Gentleness and Affection, of Love and Tenderness that may be? No—This was the *Virtue* that gave such a Lustre and Reputation to our Religion, at its first Appearance in the World; by this it triumph'd over the Prejudices and Interests of some of its greatest Enemies; and I may venture to say, from a thousand Examples, made way for its Reception into those hearts that

were proof even against the Conviction of Miracles: For, surpriz'd with the Novelty not only, but with the Noble Quality of the *Vertue*, the World knew not how to resist it. There was no standing out against such Generous Goodness, that Forgave and did Good, at the same time: For to hear Men Praying for the Happiness of those that Tortur'd and Tormented them; and to see 'em actually exercising their Charity upon the very Instruments of Cruelty, was such an Argument of something that was more than Humane in this *Vertue*, that neither the Wickedest nor the Hardest Hearts cou'd withstand its Violence or Conviction. Goalers and Hangmen, us'd to Cruelty and Blood without relenting, cou'd not yet behold the Charms of this Grace, without submitting to its Unresistible Addresses; for many, even of these, became Martyrs to these Truths, at the same Instant that they were Persecuting them in Others.

○ Have we not need then, *Gentlemen*, to Revive the Practice of this admirable Grace; and to add to our *Brotherly-kindness Charity*, in an Age of so much Enmity and Hatred, and those occasion'd partly by our Differences in Opinion? Especially since nothing is so likely to conquer the Obstinacy, and triumph over the Prejudices of those that are at the greatest Distance from us, as the constant Treating them with all the Candor and Affection, with all that Readiness of Obliging them by all Acts of Courtesie and Humanity, and that Officiousness of doing them all the Good we can, which this Grace will inspire us withal. I am able, *Tell me*, to shew you from the History of former Times,

Times, that this very *Vertue* alone, has done Wonders in Cases of this Nature—When on the contrary, the Experience of above a hundred Years, has taught us that Methods of Severity and Roughness, have not been able to bring any over to our Sentiments and Opinions ; They have added indeed a keener Edge to our Animosities, and set us at a greater distance, by sowing our Tempers, and rendring us mutually Unmerciful—They have made us watch for one anothers halting, as the Prophet *Jeremiah* speaks ; and glad of all Opportunities of raising the Reputation of our own Party, by lessening the Credit of Another : But what have they done towards the Uniting us, either in Affection or Principles ? He that was an Enemy to us, is so still ; and he that thought otherwise in Religion than we do, has not alter'd his Mind, nor made any Approaches to ours. Is it not time then to change an old Roughness of Humour, for the Softnesses of this charming *Vertue*, which carries so great a force with it as is not easily resisted ? What can we do better in such Circumstances, than strike in with the Wisdom of our Governours ? And since they have thought it best for the Common Good, to grant a Liberty of Conscience, that we shou'd do so too ; and not any longer treat those as Enemies who differ from us in Opinion, because we have been pleas'd, for no other Reason, to esteem them so ? And this we shall be induced to do the sooner, if we consider that those bitter Prejudices we have one against another for differences in Opinion, seem to owe their being to something of Pride : For he that differs from us, virtually

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condemns the Choice we have made; and by Thinking and Believing otherwise than we do, plainly concludes us in the wrong; and this we cannot bear, because by so doing, we imagine they call in question our Wisdom, and have a mean Opinion of our Judgment. But if this were a sufficient ground for our Displeasure, I do not see how 'tis possible that Peace should be maintain'd in the World upon any Account: for in all other things, as well as Religion, nothing is more common than diversities of Opinion and Judgment; which yet does not make us fall together by the Ears, or Uneasie and Peevish, in one anothers Conversation; and therefore I can see no Reason why it should be so in this. 'Tis true, we do not make this the Reason why we use one another so ill about matters of Religion; but pretend the *Honour of God*, and *Charity to our Brothers Soul*; but in Truth these are only Pretences: For tho' either of these, and much more both together, wou'd justify my Endeavouring to Reclaim a Mistaken Brother, by Methods of Gentleness and Mildness; yet neither of them will justify my Hating him, or Treating him as my Enemy, if he will not. To do so, is but Refining upon the present Discipline of the *French Monarch*; and doing that by *Bitter Words*, which he is doing by *Cruel Deeds*. For he is every day sending Men to the Gallies, and damning them to perpetual Slavery and Imprisonment; and all (as he says) *for the Glory of God, and the Salvation of their Souls*. I do not speak this, as if I thought the Members of our Church had been guilty of Treating their Adversaries with more Roughness and Severity than they have shew'd to us.—No—I know there is no comparison to be made of what we have Done, to what we have Suffer'd of that nature; and that not from the Tongues and Pens only, but from the Hands of our Dissenting Brethren; yea, even at this day, I know there is a vast difference in our Behaviour towards them, and theirs to us: But since there has been a manifest Failure in point of *Charity* on both sides, I wou'd press the more universal Practice of this Vertue more especially upon the Members of our Communion; that so by *overcoming Evil*
with

with Good, we might arrive to the most Elevated Point of our Religion, and make the World see that we have spread our Charity as wide as the Gospel, *and in a more particular manner than Others*, to take into our Affection all that are within the Bounds of Discipleship. *To love them only that love us*, is (our blessed Saviour himself being witness) but the Vertue of a *Publican*; and to be kind only to them of the same Sentiments and Persuasions with our selves, but the Religion of a *Pharisee*; yea, it is but a kind of self-love, like an admiring our own Images in the Features of another. But the Charity the Apostle here recommends, is of so extended a nature, that it scorns to be confin'd within the narrow limits of a Party; it makes the whole World indeed its Province, and every Man its Object that needs it. 'Tis therefore an Argument of great Meanness and Narrowness of Soul, for a Man to confine all his Concern and Love to those only of his own Opinion and Way: But we then do, and become like God, when we widen the Circle, and take in the Interest of all our Brethren: He sheds his kindly Influences abroad, and so shou'd we; his Sun and his Rain knows no distinction of Persons: And his Spiritual Tenders are no less Universal than his Temporal; for He offers his Grace to all, all are invited by his Spirit to Repentance; His Promises and Threatnings, his Mercies and Judgments concern all: And shou'd we not then, that Endeavour, or rather are Commanded to be like him, imitate him also in this, in doing all the good we can, and shewing all Kindness and Tenderneſs, even to those that are at the greatest distance from us either in Affection or Principles? To do this indeed, is to fulfil the Gospel of Christ; and, *as we have opportunity to do good unto all Men*. To do this, is indeed, as St. Paul advises, *1 Theſ. 3. 12. To increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all Men; and to follow that which is good both among our selves and others*, as he has it, *1 Theſ. 5. 15.* And if we were able by these to reconcile the Affections of our Brethren to us, tho' we could not their Principles; this wou'd be a Victory worth contending for; since it wou'd effectually put a stop to that Bitter-

Mat. 5. 46.

Gal. 6. 10.

1 Theſ.

3. 12.

1 Theſ.

5. 15.

Bitterness and Wrath which have given our common Enemy so great Advantages over us : Which is the next Particular that I come now to speak to—viz.

Secondly, The Danger and Mischief we incur by the Neglect of this Vertue.

And this is so Great, and so very Certain, as that no wise Man can answer it to his own Discretion, that shall continue this Folly any longer, at the Expence of his own and Religion's Security : For this Union of our Affections is so necessary to the Safety of Both, that (like the main Bulwarks of a Fort) if it stands, there is no danger from without ; but if we pull it down, we lay our selves open to all the Malice and Mischiefs of Men, that will be sure to attack us with Fire and Faggot. The Prophet *Micah* threatens the Jews with a Destruction that should arise within themselves ; *Tby casting down*, says he, *shall be in the midst of thee* ; by which he means, either that tho' no Foreign Enemy oppos'd them, yet they should come to nothing thro' their mutual Quarrels and Divisions ; or else that their contending among themselves should make them fall an easier Prey to a Foreign Sword : Which is a Judgment so suitable to our present Circumstances, and so lately likely to have been the Case of this Nation, that I cannot but press the consideration of it upon you, as a Motive to teach you to be wiser hereafter, than to continue those Animosities any longer, which had almost ruin'd us, and will do so still, if we pursue them. *Solomon* tells us (and we need not be ashamed to learn Wisdom from him) That *Reproof entereth more into a Wise Man, than an hundred stripes into a Fool* ; meaning, I suppose, that the only shewing a Prudent Man his Folly or Danger, was Caution enough to secure him from ever falling into the like again ; but that Fools would be guilty again even of the same brutish Extravagancies for which they had smarted before : That we may not therefore fall under the imputation of so much Indiscretion, especially in a thing that so nearly concerns us, we should do well to take a wise Mans Course in this Case, by making our former Danger a warning to us, never to come into the like Condition for the Future.

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The World has long since entertain'd but a mean Opinion of the *English* Wisdom; we speak and look gravely, some of us indeed, they say, as Men that understood our own Interest; but that we carry only the formal signs of Wisdom, or else we wou'd never have suffer'd our selves in the late Reigns to have been made such Tools of, as to carry on the Designs of our profess'd Enemies, by falling together by the Ears, and giving one another all the ill Language imaginable; and that for no other reason in the world, but because they desir'd it shou'd be so: A piece of good nature certainly, for which they cannot but always have a wonderful respect for us, whatever they think of our Wisdom. Solomon indeed has told us, That *in vain is the Net spread in the sight of any Bird*: and one wou'd be apt to think so truly, had we not seen the contrary in some very remarkable Instances; where Men (otherwise of foresight) cou'd yet suffer themselves to be decoy'd into a Snare that was openly enough laid by our late bungling Politicians. I need not explain my self in this particular, since he that will but take the Pains to look back into the History of the late Times, and there consider the danger of our Circumstances, with our unaccountable Behaviour under them, will be able to guess what I mean. We have great reason therefore, when we reflect upon our Miscarriage, in this particular (instead of endeavouring to defend or renew them) to confess ingenuously with *David* in another case, and say, *O Lord, take away the Iniquity of thy Servants, for we have done very foolishly*. But then it is impossible to convince the World of our Experience in this Point, unless we take up the constant and general Profession of this Virtue of Charity; by which we shall not only strengthen our own Cause, but weaken the hands, and confound the Devices of our Enemies. For as *Moses* tells the People of *Israel*, with respect to their obedience to the Divine Laws in general, so say I to you, of the Practice of this Grace in particular, *Keep therefore and do it, for this is your Wisdom and your Understanding in the sight of the Nations*; that so when they see our mutual Love and Agreement, condescending to, and bearing with the Infirmities of one another, and endeavouring to keep the *Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, they may say of us, as he goes on, *Surely this great Nation is a wise and understanding People*. And having thus gone over the two First Particulars, I come now to the third and last. E Third-

Prov. i. 17.

2 Sam. 24.

10.

Deut. 4. 6.

Thirdly, The applying them to the Present Time & Occasion.

And now, *Gentlemen*, I am to speak to you, not merely as Members of our Church, but as a Society combin'd together on purpose, as it were, for the Cultivation of some of these Virtues recommended by the Apostle, especially that of *Brotherly-kindness*, as it contains the Love we owe to one another, and our Charity to the Poor. But as I question not, but the Glory of God, and the Honour of Religion, as well as the Good of our Brethren, has been and is the Design of this Society, so I shall take the Liberty to recommend to you, as such, this Virtue of *Godliness*, as it has been explain'd in this Discourse. We cannot but with an infinite regret and horror, reflect upon the Outrages that are still done Publickly to Religion, notwithstanding all the Care the Government has taken to suppress them; and I know no Remedy so likely to put a stop to this Insolence, as our uniting all our Forces, and appearing vigorously in defence of those Truths which these Men laugh at, and endeavour to run down. As for us of the Clergy, whatever we have or can say, in defence of our Religion, it is excepted against, as coming from Men that (as they say) are byas'd in the Case: They tell us 'tis we that have Palm'd these Doctrines upon the World, and that therefore it is unreasonable that we should be appeal'd to as Judges, who have an Interest in the Cause: Nay, some of these *Peruosa's* go so far as to affirm, That all the Articles of the Christian Religion, as they are distinguish'd from those of Nature, are but the Revelations of Priestcraft; and that beside the Being of a God and his Providence, and perhaps the Doctrine of Future Rewards and Punishments (and some of 'em will not own so much) there are no other Articles of Faith, but what have been made so by the *Knavery of the Gown*. These are things, they say, we maintain, because they maintain us; for that under Pretence of Instructing the World, we are but *Sacrificing to our own Net*. In short, They say of all that belong to our Profession, as one of the *Unitarians* said of the late Archbishop and others, *That we are the Pensioners of the World, and that we have a mighty propensity to believe as it is for our Turn and Interest*—That we are so much under the Power of such fatal *Byasses*, that our Doctrine is the more to be suspected, because it is *ours*—And that the only Reason we have to maintain these *Opinions*,

Hab. i. 16.

Answer to
the Arch-
bishop's
Sermon,
P. 44.

ous, is, because we must. Well, the Prophet *Malachi*, I am sure, tells us that in times of old things used to be far otherwise; that the Lips of the Priest should preserve Knowledge, and that others were to seek the Law at their Mouths. But it seems all the Knowledge our Adversaries are pleas'd to allow us now, is only a greater Cunning to impose; and that, of all others, the Truth is least to be sought at our Mouths, because (as they say) 'tis our Interest to deceive. Will it not then, Gentlemen, become you, upon all occasions, the more earnestly, to stand up for the Interest of Religion, and the Honour of Almighty God, from which we are Excluded; as Men too much byais'd to be allow'd? For how unjustly soever they are prejudic'd against us in this particular, they can have no such Exception against you: Let me beseech you therefore, as you are united together in a Body, to carry on the Great and Noble Vertues of *Brotherly-kindness* and *Charity*, so that whilst you mind your Brother, you would not forget your God: And as there are many amongst you of great Quality and Parts, of great Estates and Power, so you would make use of all those Qualifications to brow-beat this insolent Devil of Irreligion and Prophaness, which yet dares brave the Power of the Magistrate, and the Thunder of the Almighty. I hope there is no one here that thinks these things either beneath or foreign to his Care, or that will say of his Maker, as *Joash* did of *Baal*, *If he be a God, let him plead for himself*; for so he will to be sure; He will take his time to call these insolent Sinners to account; but in the mean time He expects that we shou'd do something too; to shew that we esteem nothing so valuable as his Honour, or any Truths worth defending so much, as those he has reveal'd. It is well known, Gentlemen, that our Ancestors in the County of *Kent*, in ancient Time always laid Claim to the First Rank (as the most Honourable, because the most Dangerous Post) in Battel; we have here then the opportunity of more than Rivalling the Glory of their Station, by engaging first in defence of a glorious Cause, that is Attack'd by (a Valiant, I will not say, but by) a Fool-hardy and desperate Enemy; Fool-hardy I call 'em, because they lose all that can be valuable to a Man, if they are Routed, and yet would gain by the Victory nothing. Come on then, Gentlemen, and let us play the Men for God, and for the Glory of his

Mal. 2. 7.

Judg. 6. 31.

Josh. 24. 15 his Name ; and conclude with good *Joshua*, That if it seem Evil, or Foolish, to Others to Reverence or Obey God, let them serve whom they please ; but that we and our Houses, and all that belongs to us, will serve the Lord.

And having thus consulted the Honour of God, and made it the chiefest of our Care to discourage all Prophaness and Irreligion, it is time then to look after our Brother, and to add to our *Godliness*, *Brotherly-kindness* and *Charity*. But I shall have the less need to press the Practice of this Second Duty upon you, that of *Brotherly-kindness*, I mean, since 'tis professedly the Design of your Society to advance it. The mutual Endearment of one to another, and the sweet and charming Entercourses of Friendship, have been already begun and carried on, to the great Honour of Religion ; and will in time be to that Perfection, I hope, by the laudable Emulation of the several Honourable Societies of this Nation, that we may once more retrieve the Glory of Religion, by adding this lost Vertue to it again ; that so we may look like the Primitive Times once more : And all that live round about us, observing the Tenderness, the mutual Affections, the Readiness to pardon Injuries, and to do Good against them, and the unfained Concern we have for one anothers Happiness and Prosperity, may say of us, as they did of old, *See how these Christians love one another !* And then for that other part of *Brotherly-kindness*, viz. The doing Good to, and Relieving the Necessities and Wants of the Poor, this is a Grace that has been so mightily promoted of late years in this happy Nation, and has been made the Care and Business of so many great Communities, yea, I may say of Prince and People, that our Enemies have no reason now (as they did formerly) to make Enquiry after our *Protestant Charity*. You your selves, *Gentlemen*, are able to vindicate our Religion from this Aspersions, by what you have already done of this nature.

Isa. 58. 7. Go on then, to be still *Eyes to the Blind*, and *Feet to the Lame* ; to deal your *Bread to the Hungry*, and your *Drink to the Thirsty* ;

Phil. 4. 18. which the Apostle tells us, is a *Sacrifice well-pleasing and acceptable to God* ; yea, so acceptable, that he hath promis'd never to forget it, or them that offer it ; for so the Psalmist tells

Psal. 142. 6. us, That the *Righteous* (that is, the Liberal) *shall be had in*

Acts 10. 31. *Everlasting Remembrance* : And so the Angel tells *Cornelius*,
That

That his Prayers and his Alms were bad is Remembrance in the sight of God; and the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Heb. 6. 10. That God is not unrighteous, to forget your Work and Labour of Love, which ye shewed towards his Name, in that ye have ministered to the Saints, and do minister: So that if we suffer the Poor to reap some of our Temporal things, we may promise our selves a good Reward from him that has said, *He that giveth to the Poor, lendeth to the Lord*; and whatev'er he so bestows, *shall be paid him again*; for he has been pleas'd in these words publicly to own himself a Debtor to the Merciful Man; and you may be sure of the performance of Covenants from him, whose Truth and Word never fails; for *the Heaven and Earth pass away, yet his Word shall not pass away*. And when we have gone thus far, Gentlemen, viz. to Vindicate the Honour of God, and to secure the Subsistence of our poor Brother; Shall we take one Step farther, and to our *Godliness and Brotherly-kindness*, add *Charity*, i. e. A real Tenderness and Concern even for those that most differ from us in Opinions and Sentiments of Religion? To Do and Practice this upon all occasions, will bring a greater and more lasting Honour upon our Country, than it enjoys upon the account of its more greater Priviledges, which it possesses above others: For to do good to Enemies, or to those we may be apt to esteem so, is to arrive at the highest Pinacle of Religion, and then we shall be as a *Candle set upon a Candlestick*, or as a *City upon a Hill*; and among a crooked and perverse Generation, among which we live, *shall shine as Lights in the World*. And when we have gone thus far, there will scarce remain any thing for me so much as to wish for you; for all Blessings both Temporal and Spiritual, are the Hand-maids of these Cardinal-Virtues: For to Practise these, is to be in actual Possession of the *Kingdom of Heaven and the Righteousness thereof*, (as our Saviour meant these words) and then we are assured by the same infallible Oracle, *That all other things shall be added unto us*. To which happy Estate, by the constant practise of these Vertues, that we may all arrive, God of his infinite Mercy and Goodness, grant. Amen.